COMIC SHOP NEWS

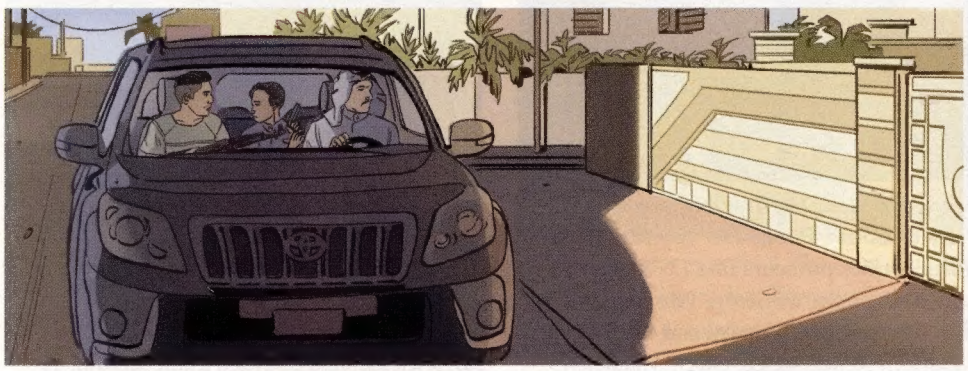
YASMEEN

Yasmeen: A Tale of War and Inner Peace

A teenager's life is almost always turbulent and complicated in even the best of circumstances. But when you're a teenager whose life is ripped asunder by brutality, cruelty, and forced enslavement, survival seems all too uncertain, and happiness almost impossible. But one Iraqi teenager refuses to let her horrifying past destroy her—and readers will get a chance to meet her in ***Yasmeen #1.***

"***Yasmeen*** follows an Iraqi teenage girl during two periods of her life. First, as a normal, happy 16-year-old who must find the courage within herself to endure slavery after getting captured and sold by ISIS soldiers," writer *Saif A. Ahmed* told ***CSN.*** "The second period takes place after surviving two long years of captivity where Yasmeen comes out a different person, unable to connect to the things that she loved before, and she must go through a different kind of struggle as she tries to adjust to the normal life with her family as a refugee in a foreign country, America."

Rather than chronicle Yasmeen's life in a linear fashion, Ahmed chooses to interleave the tales of her life in Mosul and her later life in the United States. "It would have been much easier for me to write the story in a linear way, but I felt that I could use the connection between past and present to put the reader inside Yasmeen's mind without any use of internal monologue or exposition," Ahmed explained. "The comic may take place in two different periods; still, the two storylines complement each other narratively and thematically, sometimes even visually, and after a few pages, the readers won't even need any caption to tell them which time period they're at."



Yasmeen's story will strike readers as disturbingly real, with good reason. "I based Yasmeen's struggle off of many real-life stories of amazing women, like *Nadia Murad*, who had the superpowers not only to endure terrible tragedy but to collect her shattered self, move on in life, and help others. Yasmeen's story is a small tribute to those women, many of whom did not survive to tell their tales."

Yasmeen is a complicated book—it chronicles a brutal tale of exploitation and enslavement, but it's also a young-adult story of courage and coming of age. Ahmed is familiar with the horrors of the ISIS invasion, and that familiarity inspired him. "In 2014, millions of lives were interrupted, men murdered, women enslaved. When the news talk about the victims, people may feel sympathetic, but there's always this sense of safety that this won't happen to them. I was living in Baghdad in 2014, just a couple of hundred miles away from where it was happening. I did not have any sense of safety. The fear that this dark fate could happen to my family made me care much more about the victims. ***Yasmeen*** came from that feeling where I wanted to get the readers, no matter where they lived, to care about and understand the suffering of their fellow humans while reading an entertaining piece of literature at the same time."

While Yasmeen deals with issues involving politics and religion, this isn't a preachy book, and there's no political or religious polarization here. Was it a challenge to walk that tightrope so as to create a book that could appeal to the largest possible audience? "Living in Iraq made me know a thing or two about religious polarization. After the 2003 war, sectarian violence took many lives in Iraq. The sequence where Yasmeen and her uncle get stopped by terrorists at a checkpoint is actually based on a real incident where I almost lost my life. I personally come from a Sunni father and a Shia mother, so it was easy for me not to take sides, especially since my interest was on a human level. Also, by living in two very different parts of the world, I was shocked to find out that people are the same everywhere, and that's what I wanted to explore in my story."

Ahmed's story is intense, disturbing, moving, and at times inspirational, and the art of *Fabiana Mascolo* brings that story to life visually through fluid, delicate linework and vivid visual storytelling that perfectly complement Ahmed's script. How did she become involved with ***Yasmeen?*** "I was just fortunate!" Ahmed said. "Fabiana reached out on Facebook to compliment the art of another project I was working on, and when I checked out her art, I immediately knew that she would be the artist for ***Yasmeen***, which was just a concept at the time. A couple of months later, my artist couldn't continue due to other commitments, so I put the project on hold and started writing ***Yasmeen*** with Fabiana's art in mind. Fabiana is such a diverse artist. She can adapt to different styles. At the beginning of our collaboration, we agreed that despite the gritty subject, the art should be beautiful and sensitive. After she showed me her concept art for the character design, I was happy that my other project was stalled."

Ahmed and Mascolo intentionally stayed away from graphic depictions of brutality in ***Yasmeen.*** "I wasn't as interested in the brutal acts of violence themselves as much as their impact on the victims," Ahmed said. "I chose to make Yasmeen a teenager to tackle the subject of growing up through horrible circumstances. Young adults can enjoy complicated, thoughtful stories as much as adults.

"I think the book will evoke different feelings depending on the reader's age. For me, I cried as I thought of my daughter while writing the emotional scene in the second issue. For young adults, I hope the story would get an even more powerful reaction since they're the same age as Yasmeen."

Yasmeen seems like the sort of book that would have been right at home at *Karen Berger's* Vertigo. "Thank you for the compliment!" Saif said. "***Y—The Last Man*** is one of my favorite comics of all time. I *love* character-driven stories. I think that's what distinguished Vertigo during their golden years. Everything is more intense when the reader cares about the characters, the struggle, the stakes, the action, and Yasmeen has plenty of that. I can't wait for Fabiana to draw the 13-page action sequence that takes place in the last issue. I was on the edge of my seat as I was writing it."

Yasmeen is an atypical project

Courtesy of your friendly neighborhood comics outlet!

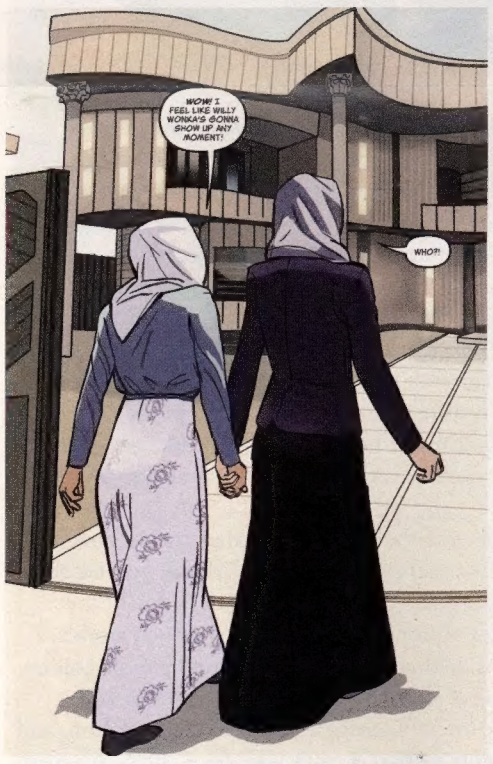
for Scout, but the company knew they wanted the book as soon as it was presented to them. "When I sent out ***Yasmeen's*** pitch, I had positive reactions from different comic book publishers, but the guys at Scout were ready to sign me on after going through six pages of art and a one-page synopsis!" Ahmed said. "I'm very lucky and honored to have Scout's veteran team, *Brendan Deneen, James Pruett,* and *James Haick,* believing in an unknown writer like me. It's a dream come true.

"When we received ***Yasmeen***, everyone on the review committee just really thought it was a powerfully written and beautifully illustrated story that needed to be told," Scout Publisher *James Pruett* explained, "and we at Scout consider ourselves very fortunate that Saif chose Scout to tell this story. Scout feels that genre doesn't matter as to what type of story we ultimately decide to publish. We're more concerned about the *quality* of the story as opposed to the type or genre of the series. Everyone here at Scout is very proud to publish ***Yasmeen***."

"I think that shows that they're interested in good stories no matter what the genre, but I don't want to speak for them. I am just glad that they did decide to take on ***Yasmeen***," Saif added.

Yasmeen #1, a $3.99 comic, is scheduled for June release.

by Cliff Biggers



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Coming Comics—IDW in June

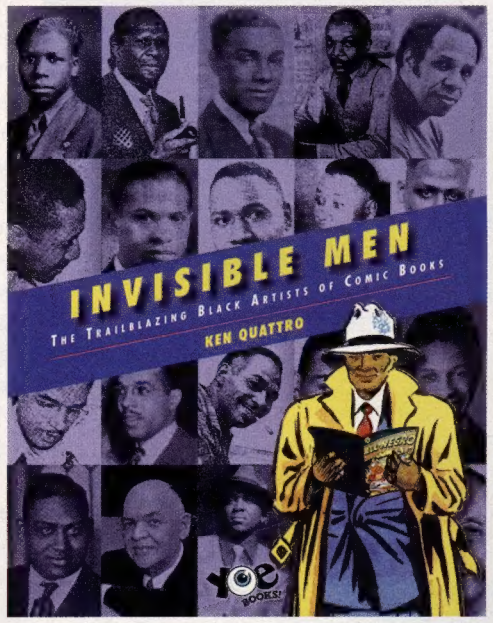
Be Gay, Do Comics TP features dozens of stories about LGBTQIA experiences, ranging from personal stories to queer history to cutting satire, featuring the work of more than 30 cartoonists including *Hazel Newlevant, Joey Alison Sayers, Maia Kobabe, Matt Lubchansky, Breena Nuñez, Sasha Velour, Shing Yin Khor, Levi Hastings, Mady G, Bianca Xunise, Kazimir Lee,* and many, many more!

In ***Chained to the Grave #2*** (by *Brian Level, Andy Eschenbach, & Kate Sherron),* undead outlaw Roy Mason finds himself caught between a rock and a hard place as he sets out in search of treasure. But Roy, trying to do right by the wife and children he left behind, soon finds out that everything is not always as it seems.

Delve into the twisted psyche of Doctor Mindbender as he begins the next horrific stage of development for Cobra's automaton soldiers in ***GI Joe #10*** (by *Paul Allor & Chris Evenhuis).* When Mindbender's experiments turn against him, can he find anyone to come to his aid in the den of vipers that is Cobra?

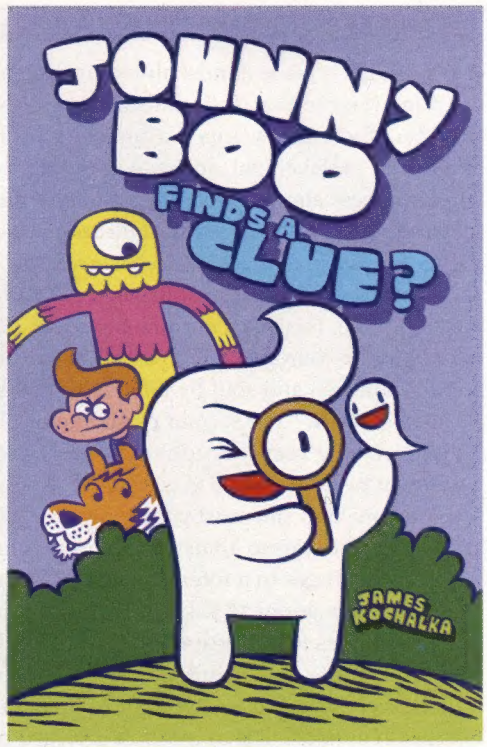
Who keeps the galaxy silly? The Glork Patrol! When the patrol crash-lands on the sinister Bad Planet, Baby Gonk finds a giant egg... so of course he sits on it. Soon it hatches a baby Quackaboodle, the most dangerous creature in the universe! Find out what happens next in *James Kochalka's* ***Glork Patrol Book One: Glork Patrol on the Bad Planet.***

Sidney is the newest resident of the Haunted Mansion, a retirement home for ghosts. Now she has to learn how to scare visiting mortals in order to earn her keep—all while resident mean ghost Constance is out to make it all as difficult as possible in ***The Haunted Mansion GN*** (by *Sina Grace & Egle Bartolini).*



Invisible Men: The Trailblazing Black Artists of Comic Books HC (by *Ken Quattro)* profiles comics pioneers like *EC Stoner,* a descendant of one of *George Washington's* slaves who became a renowned fine artist of the Harlem Renaissance; *Owen Middleton,* who was sentenced to life in Sing Sing; and *Matt Baker,* the most revered of all black comic artists and the man who drew the first groundbreaking black comic book hero, Vooda!

In *James Kochalka's* ***Johnny Boo Book 11: Johnny Boo Finds a Clue? HC,*** a secret thief has stolen Johnny Boo's ice cream. Armed



with his mighty magnifying glass, Johnny Boo will find all the clues and capture the vicious villain.

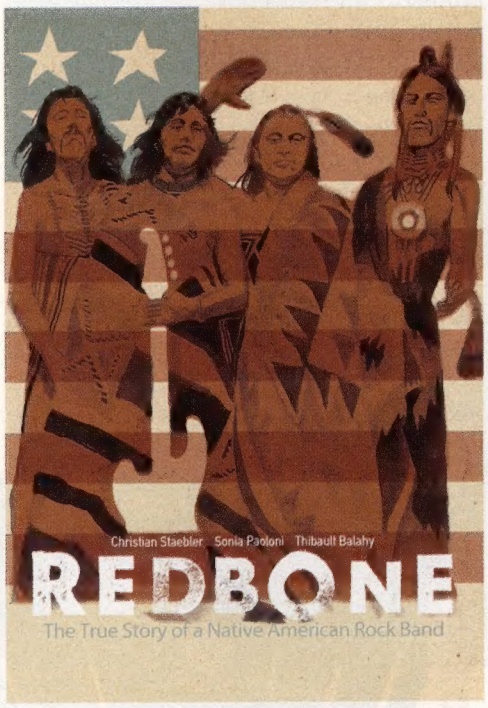
Anne Opotowsky & Amber Ma's ***Listening to the Hundredfold Notes of the Avowed Nightingales: The Walled City Trilogy Book Three TP,*** the final volume of the massive saga, combines a historical setting with powerful modern resonance in a tale of dragon fire, ancient qi, and vengeful powers.

Captain Marvel and Scarlet Witch travel to an abandoned, and seemingly haunted, space station in ***Marvel Action Avengers #5*** (by *Chad Bowers & Butch Mapa).* Will these two mighty Avengers get to the bottom of this interstellar mystery and find the foe behind it all?

Carol Danvers, aka Captain Marvel, is stuck inside a Kree video game in ***Marvel Action: Captain Marvel #2*** (by *Sam Maggs & Sweeney Boo).* Will she be able to level up through racing challenges, street fights, and fantasy RPGS? Or will she run out of lives before she reaches the finish line?

The Spidey team has taken on ferocious foes of all kinds, but they've never faced anyone with a sting like this Scorpion's in

Marvel Action: Spider-Man #6 (by *Brandon Easton & Fico Ossio*).

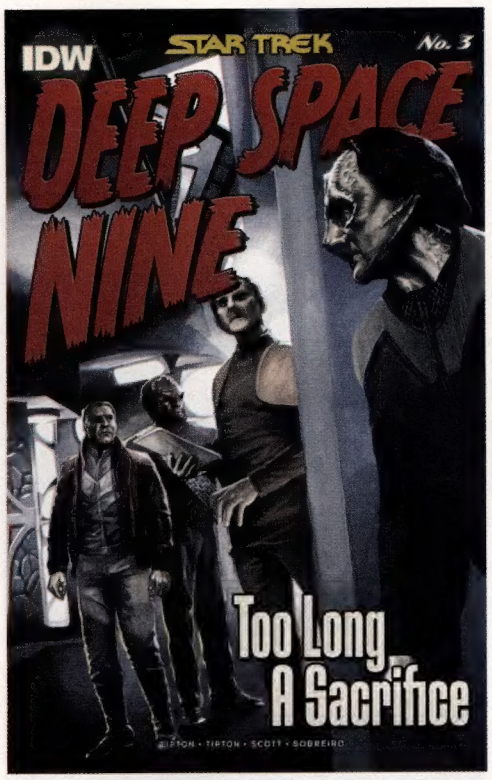


Redbone: The True Story of a Native American Rock Band HC (by *Christian Staebler, Sonia Paoloni, & Thibault Balahy*), explores the story of the Native American civil rights movement and the resulting struggle for identity told through the high-flying career of West Coast rock'n'roll pioneers, Redbone.

Tensions rise among the crew of the Vagabond as technical delays and mechanical failures frustrate their salvage of the sunken U-boat Bremen in ***Sea of Sorrows #2*** (by *Rich Douek & Alex Cormack*). But the siren song of sunken gold is nothing compared to the seductive power of the monster stalking them all!

Snake Eyes has long been the most mysterious member of the Joes, but how long can he keep his past classified when he's forced to play his hand? Find out in ***Snake Eyes: Deadgame #1*** by superstar writer/artist *Rob Liefeld*, with *Chad Bowers*.

As Odo forges a fragile working relationship with the past-his-prime investigator the Federation sent to help, new suspects emerge amidst a rising body count in ***Star***



Trek: Deep Space Nine—Too Long a Sacrifice #3 (by *David Tipton, Scott Tipton, & Greg Scott*). But just when the team thinks they're getting close to the culprit, a shocking discovery changes everything!

With the Klingon threat behind them, the crew of the Enterprise begin their victory tour of the original planets of the Federation in ***Star Trek Year Five #15*** (by *Silvia Califano & Stephen Thompson*). But they'll soon discover that for all of the danger they faced on the five-year mission, the biggest threat of all may be something closer to home.

Between the events of ***The Last Jedi*** and ***The Rise of Skywalker,*** Poe and Finn take Rey to a remote planet to continue her Jedi training in ***Star Wars Adventures #2*** (by *Michael Moreci, Ilias Kyriazis, & Megan Levens*). But they're surprised to find that the First Order's reach extends far and wide.

The Turtles take to the sewers in ***Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles #107*** (by *Sophie Campbell & Nelson Daniel*) to confront the deadly new creature that has been stalking mutants. When their home court advantage is turned against them, no one is safe!

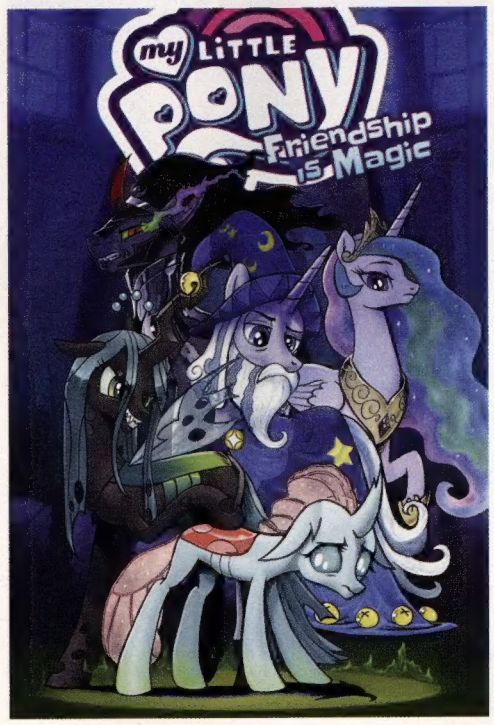
Splinter is gone; the Turtles are in disarray, and the Shredder has returned in ***Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles Annual 2020*** (by *Tom Waltz & Adam Gorham*). But all is not as it seems as the Turtles' most-feared enemy struggles with this new opportunity to regain his honor.

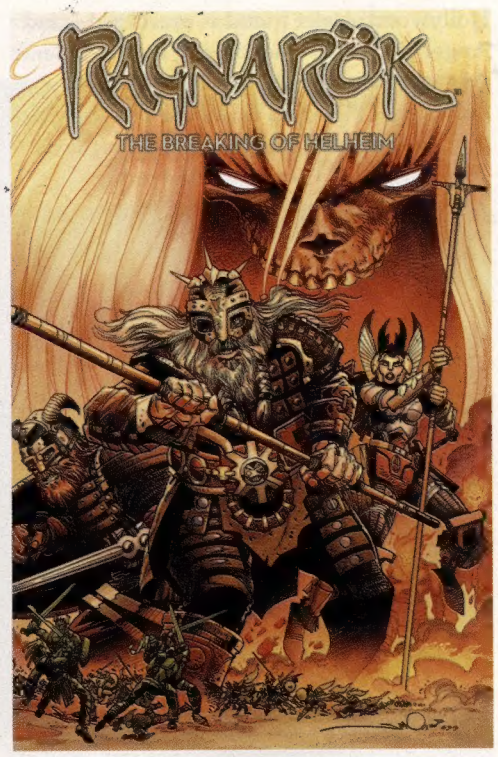
Up against an army of Decepticons, the T-800 must rely on his Autobot allies to even the odds in ***Transformers vs the Terminator #4*** (by *David Marriotte, John Barber, Tom Waltz, & Alex Milne*). And, with luck, both sides will thin each other out for his last gambit to eliminate all Cybertronians.

Usagi is back in his home province for a pilgrimage to his late lord's gravesite in *Stan Sakai's* ***Usagi Yojimbo #11***. However, wearing the Mifune clan crest in Lord Hikiji's territory has made him an enemy. Now beaten and near death, he has made his way to the one place he had been avoiding—the village in which he grew up.

IDW collected editions (advance solicited for July, August, and September release) include:

- ***Corto Maltese: Mu—The Lost Continent TP,*** the final volume in *Hugo Pratt's* epic series.
- ***Dungeons & Dragons Drizzt 100-Page Giant,*** collecting classic Drizzt tales by *RA Salvatore* and others.
- ***Dungeons & Dragons: Infernal Tides TP,*** collecting the five-issue series.
- ***Dying Is Easy TP,*** collecting the five-issue series.
- ***GI Joe: A Real American Hero—Complete Silence,*** collecting ***GI Joe: A Real American Hero #s 21 & 21.5,*** which were published almost a quarter-century apart.
- ***GI Joe: Cobra—The Last Laugh,*** collecting the entire Chuckles saga.
- ***I Can Sell You a Body TP,*** collecting the four-issue series.
- ***Locke & Key #1 Facsimile Edition,*** an exact reprinting of this hard-to-find first issue.
- ***Marvel Action: Captain Marvel—AIM Small TP,*** collecting ***Marvel Action Captain Marvel #s 4–6.***
- ***My Little Pony: Friendship Is Magic Volume 19 TP,*** collecting ***Friendship Is Magic #s 84–88.***





- ***Ragnarök Volume 3: The Breaking of Helheim HC,*** collecting ***Ragnarök: The Breaking of Helheim #s 7–12.***
- ***Star Trek: Debt of Honor Facsimile Edition,*** an exact reprinting in magazine format of the graphic novel by *Chris Claremont & Adam Hughes*.
- ***Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles Reborn Volume 1: From the Ashes TP,*** collecting ***TMNT #s 101–105.***
- ***Transformers '84: Legends & Rumors 100-Page Giant,*** collecting ***Transformers #1, Transformers UK #s 9–12,*** and the ***Transformers '84 #0*** oneshot!

Coming Comics—Boom! in June

Everyone knows the consequences of absolute power—and the three Sams are no exception. As their different desires come to a head, the only thing that stands in their way is each other. And Chip's deadly powers are in the center of it all in ***Alienated #5*** (by *Simon Spurrier & Chris Wildgoose*).

An untold story from Angel's past is revealed in ***Angel + Spike #13*** (by *Bryan Edward Hill & Piotr Kowalski*) when Angel's

Hollywood starlet friend is murdered—and Angel is the only one looking for her killer. As Angel discovers the truth behind her death, he'll be forced to choose between justice and redemption—and he will make a choice that will haunt him forever.

Bear is a guide dog for the blind, and he would do anything for his best friend and owner, Patrick. But when Bear suddenly loses his own vision, he worries that he has lost his purpose! Determined to protect Patrick at all costs, Bear sets out on a quest to regain his eyesight in ***Bear OGN HG*** (by *Ben Queen & Joe Todd-Stanton).* Along the way, Bear will learn to tap into his other senses and begin to see the world from a new perspective that is at times richer and more colorful than the world he's always known.

When a beloved teacher from their school goes missing, Buffy and Kendra will have to put aside their differences to uncover the true threat—whose identity will shake both Slayers to their cores—in ***Buffy the Vampire Slayer #16*** (by *Jordie Bellaire & Julian Lopez).*

After everything—and everyone—she lost to the Hellmouth, Willow is leaving Sunnydale on a world-spanning road trip in search of her true self in ***Buffy the Vampire Slayer: Willow #1*** (by *Mariko Tamaki & Natacha Bustos).* She stumbles on a community of people like her: lost witches looking for answers... but there's a darkness at the heart of it. Now, truly alone for the first time in her life, Willow must rely only on her instincts—and her magic—to save herself from a threat Buffy never prepared her to face... or the rest of the world will pay the price.

Faith is ready to take new risks with her art and her magic—and something powerful that lives between the two—in ***Faithless II #3*** (by *Brian Azzarello & Maria Llovet).* But her experiments draw new attention, and a mysterious collector may be interested in more than just Faith's art.

When the notorious outlaw Mal Reynolds agreed to wear a sheriff's badge, he figured he could change a thing or two about how "justice" is dispensed in the 'Verse. But has the badge changed him? His former crew members are about to find out the hard way in ***Firefly #18*** (by *Greg Pak & Lalit Kumar).*

As Denis digs deeper into the secrets of Nowhere, he only finds more questions—about the strange town and about his own history. When he meets a man in full hazmat gear in ***King of Nowhere #4*** (by *W. Maxwell Prince & Tyler Jenkins),* Denis finally learns the truth about what brought him to Nowhere.

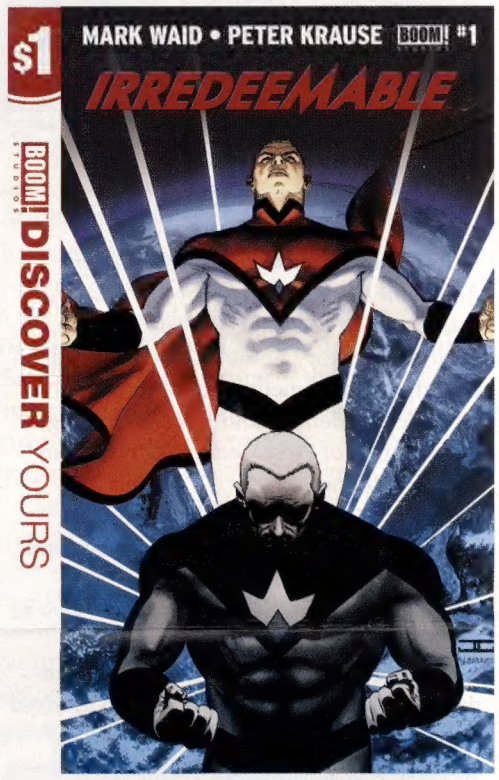
Revenge is the greatest motivator, and Gran and Duncan have awakened the ire of the mother of all monsters in ***Once & Future #10*** (by *Kieron Gillen & Dan Mora).*

The Ranger Slayer—aka Kimberly Hart, the Pink Mighty Morphin Power Ranger from the alternate universe once ruled by Lord Dakkon—returns home in ***Power Rangers: Ranger Slayer #1*** (by *Ryan Parrott & Dan Mora)*... and nothing is like she expected. In a world that knows her only as a villain, can Kimberly show her universe that she's become a hero... and is that even the right thing to do?

Daisy is on another continent working for Leland Black when she begins to realize that the problems she thought she had left behind in New York City have followed her all the way to London. As strange things continue to happen, Daisy finds that she has a bigger puzzle that must be solved in ***Red Mother #7*** (by *Jeremy Haun & Danny Luckert).*

With her mysterious employers looking to recall and reprimand her, Erica is running out of time to save the town of Archer's Peak in ***Something Is Killing the Children #9*** (by *James Tynion IV & Werther Dell'Edera).* Do the answers lie with the mysterious young girl found in the monster's lair, whom no one can identify?

Lottie gets a new lead on her case—aka the murder she was framed for—in ***Wicked Things #4*** (by *Johb Allison & Max Sarin),* but with her work at Scotland Yard consisting of photocopying and coffee runs, how will she find time to pursue the true criminal?



Boom!'s ***Discover Yours*** $1 editions for June include ***Lumberjanes #1*** and ***Irredeemable #1.***

Boom! collected editions (advance solicited for July and August release) include:

- ***Adventure Time with Fionna & Cake TP,*** collecting all the Fionna and Cake stories in one volume.
- ***Bill & Ted Omnibus TP,*** collecting ***Bill & Ted's Most Triumphant Return, Bill & Ted Go to Hell,*** and ***Bill & Ted Save the Universe.***
- ***Buffy the Vampire Slayer Legacy Edition Book Two TP,*** collecting Dark Horse's ***Buffy the Vampire Slayer #s 11–19*** and more.
- ***Ghosted in LA Volume 2 TP,*** collecting ***Ghosted in LA #s 5–8.***
- ***Irredeemable Omnibus TP,*** collecting ***Irredeemable #s 1–37, Irredeemable Special #1,*** and ***Incorruptible #s 25–26.***
- ***Labyrinth: Coronation Volume 2 TP,*** collecting ***Labyrinth: Coronation #s 5–8.***
- ***Lumberjanes Volume 15 TP,*** collecting ***Lumberjanes #s 57–60.***
- ***The Magicians: New Class TP,*** collecting the five-issue series.
- ***Mighty Morphin Power Rangers/Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles TP,*** collecting the five-issue series.
- ***Red Mother Volume 1 TP,*** collecting ***Red Mother #s 1–4.***
- ***Strange Skies over East Berlin TP,*** collecting the four-issue series.

Coming Comics—AfterShock in June

Cowboys, ninjas, soldiers, and even a trip to New York City's Central Park—it's all in ***Artemis & the Assassin #4*** (by *Stephanie Phillips & Francesca Fanitni*). When Maya's fellow assassins arrive to kill World War II hero Virginia Hall, Maya has to make a decision: watch Virginia die, or turn on "friends" and get herself killed in the process.

Jeremy attempts to track down the monster responsible for his murder as well as uncover the terrifying secret behind it in ***Dead Day #3*** (by *Ryan Parrott & Evgeniy Bornyakov*). Brandon finds himself amongst the dead and at the heart of the Revivalists' most sacred ritual.

For centuries, Samurai had defended Fukushima Prefecture from invaders. Now, still bleeding radioactivity from the nuclear plant meltdown, a land's protectors have risen in her hour of need in ***Disaster Inc #3*** (by *Joe Harris & Sebastian Piriz*). For the adventure tourists of Disaster Inc lost inside the Exclusion Zone... this is very, *very* bad.

The Godkillers return to the US to find that the gods and monsters they've been fighting abroad have brought the War on Terror home in ***Godkillers #5*** (by *Mark Sable & Maan House*).

The rural town of Franklin is a day away from annihilation by mega terraforming machines in ***Join the Future #4*** (by *Zack Kaplan & Piotr Kowalski*), and Clementine has failed to stop it, failed in her attempt at revenge, and even failed her own ideals. Now she must decide if she wants to escape with her life or take a final stand against the futuristic City's control.

As a child, James Bellyi watched his father die in the ring as payback for slurs thrown at the other fighter. Today, he's a Mixed Martial Arts star at the top of his game and one of the most popular fighters in the world... until he's outed as gay in his title-shot press conference. Abandoned overnight by his training camp, his endorsements, his fans, and his sport, Bellyi struggles to regain his title in ***Kill a Man OGN*** (by *Steve Orlando, Phillip Kennedy Johnson, & Al Morgan*)—but in order to do so, he must turn to the last person he ever wants to see again: Xavier Mayne, a gay, once-great fighter in his own right... and the man James once watched kill his father.

As she reels from a breakup with her phone, Catrin's life spins out of control in ***Lonely Receiver #2*** (by *Zac Thompson & Jen Hickman*). Everything about her existence was connected to her partner. Now she has no money, no ID, and no way to engage with the world. She's drifting alone in a sea of connection, except for the pair of disembodied eyes watching her...

Time's up for Sean Bennett, the very unfortunate man who f#%&ed up time and now has a death sentence handed down by the dreaded cyborg Future Police. The past has been f#%&ed up, and it looks like irrevocably so. What does this mean for the future? Find out in ***The Man Who F#%&ed Up Time #5*** (by *John Layman & Karl Mostert*).

A series of unexplained, violent crimes on Election Day around the US leads the FBI to zero in on a covert group of Russian terrorists in ***Red Atlantis #1*** (by *Stephanie Phillips & Robert Carey*). When a Texas journalism student named Miriam accidentally finds herself mixed up in the investigation, her life will never be the same. With political espionage, treason, and even mind control involved, how can she clear her name and stop the US from entering into a new Cold War?

The world's largest Colossal has been murdered, and Winston Wallis—the last human in a world of monsters—has been called in to solve it in ***Sympathy for No Devils #2*** (by *Brandon Thomas & Lee Ferguson*). Win will need to lean on his ability to be impossibly lucky in order to solve this case... and survive it.

With her family's killer under the muzzle of her gun, the only thing standing between Ethel and revenge is a head full of bad memories. Thanks to her obsession with fictional gunslinger Solomon Eaton, she knows there's no justice but what a man makes for himself. Meanwhile, the cowboy takes his last stand in a besieged city, risking everything for the life of his boy in ***Undone by Blood, or Shadow of a Wanted Man #5*** (by *Lonnie Nadler, Zac Thompson, & Sami Kivela*).

AfterShock collected editions include:

- ***Dark Red Volume 2: Streetlight People TP,*** collecting ***Dark Red #s 6–10.***
- ***Shoplifters Will Be Liquidated TP,*** collecting the five-issue series.

COMIC SHOP NEWS 29th ANNUAL K READER'S AWARDS

Back in December, we presented the 29th annual ***CSN Red K Awards***, a blend of commendations and critiques dedicated to pointing out some of the best and worst of the past year. At the end of that feature, we encouraged you, our readers, to send us your own Red K Awards for the best and worst of 2019—and that's just what you did! So let's take a look at what our readers had to say!

"The Mort, The Merrier" Award

Lois Lane and Superman's Pal, Jimmy Olsen

"I'm just old enough to remember the tail end of the *Mort Weisinger* Superman era, and the younger me always enjoyed his ***Jimmy Olsen*** and ***Lois Lane*** comics, which cast Superman as a guest star. I often thought they were better than the regular Superman books. Now we have both ***Lois Lane*** and ***Jimmy Olsen*** again—and they're still better than the regular Superman books!"
—Michael McKibben

The "Doomsday's Dawning" Award

Doomsday Clock #12

"*Geoff Johns & Gary Frank* gave DC the best possible plan for the next few years, and a great way to restore the glory of the DC Universe. Here's a clue, DC: This was your best-selling comic book series of the year for a reason—fans love the concepts and the story. So take a hint and make this your game plan for 2020, and not this rumored 5G thing..."
—James Nguyen

The "Doctor's Making the Rounds" Award

Doctor Who: The 13th Doctor

"Titan took up the slack when the BBC failed to deliver on new *Doctor Who* stories in 2019. Thankfully, Titan's stories were much better written than the stories the BBC gave us in 2018!"
—Leslie Samuels

The "Resurrection" Award

Second Coming

"It deserves a second mention! DC bowed to outside pressure and cancelled ***Second Coming*** before it was even seen. DC's loss was Ahoy Comics' gain. They partnered with creators *Mark Russell & Richard Pace* and brought us what turned out to be the smartest and most entertaining book of the year!"
—Steven Solomon

The "Back Before The Beginning" Award

Dark Crystal: Age of Resistance

"So this is a prequel to the Netflix show, which is a prequel to the 1982 feature film, making it a prequel to a prequel and the other previous comics, which were sequels to the film... I'm getting a headache!!"
—Tony Bowers

The "She's So Heavy" Award

The Saga Compendium

"Weighing in at a little over four and a half pounds, this oversized volume collects over 1,300 pages of the story... so far. It's clearly got a long way yet to go. Story by the ever-reliable *Brian K. Vaughan*: The astonishingly innovative art is by *Fiona Staples.*"
—Jack Dumpert

The "Never Tell Me The Odds" Award

Star Wars Adventures: Return to Vader's Castle

"Writer *Cavan Scott* defied C-3PO's typical predictions of statistical doom to craft a masterpiece. The ambition of this limited series was a child-friendly horror short story collection set in the ***Star Wars*** universe. Each story has a completely different focus while the overarching narrative of the storytellers was compelling, creepy, and engaging in its own right."
—Scott Shaffer

The "Motley Crew" Award

Savage Avengers

"If you had told me that an Avengers book featuring Conan, Woverine, Doctor Voodoo, Elektra, and the Punisher would even *exist*, let alone turn out this good, I would have said you were crazy!! But here's the proof!"
—Tony Bowers

"The Magic Is Gone" Award

Wizard Magazine

"When I first got into comics, ***Wizard*** was something I read every month. Snarky, clever, silly, sure—but it was also filled with great information and a price guide that highlighted recent hot books. I wish someone could find a way to bring it back or to do something like that again. It made comics more fun!"
—Eddie Lopez

The "Numbers Racket" Award

Numbers on the spine of trade paperbacks

"Where did the numbers go? After numbering each volume of their trade paperback collections, DC quit putting numbers on the spines. Sometimes, they don't even make the books look the same. It's hard to know what I should read next when DC is playing 'hide the book from the fans.'"
—Brandon Hyde

"The Buck Stops Here" Award

DC's Cardstock Variant Covers

"At last, someone's publishing comics with great covers printed on heavy cardstock. I'm more than willing to invest an extra buck in a comic whose cover isn't printed on tissue paper!"

—Chris Nemeth

The "His Own Worst Enemy" Award

Batman

"2019 was an amazing year for Batman. The creative teams really delivered on both the ongoing titles and all the miniseries I read. The common element was that Batman seemed to spend all his time fighting amped-up versions of himself. This year he fought his faux dad, the Bat-Joker, and whoever that was in the ***Last Knight*** limited. I hope the rogues gallery lift their game to offer some real threats and thrills in 2020—because in 2019, Batman raised the bar for the Gotham villain community!"

—Michael & Allison King

The "It's a Wonderful (Comic) Life" Award

Wonder Twins

"The Wonder Comics line, led by ***The Wonder Twins***, has led the humorous superhero fans back to DC. DC long has been making it hard to find 'fun' comics in their line-up, but these titles not only are entertaining, they are also thought provoking. *Mark Russell* provides the power siblings Zan and Jayn, with a good story as well as heartfelt characters. Drunkula started as a bad pun and ended up a heartbreaking villain."

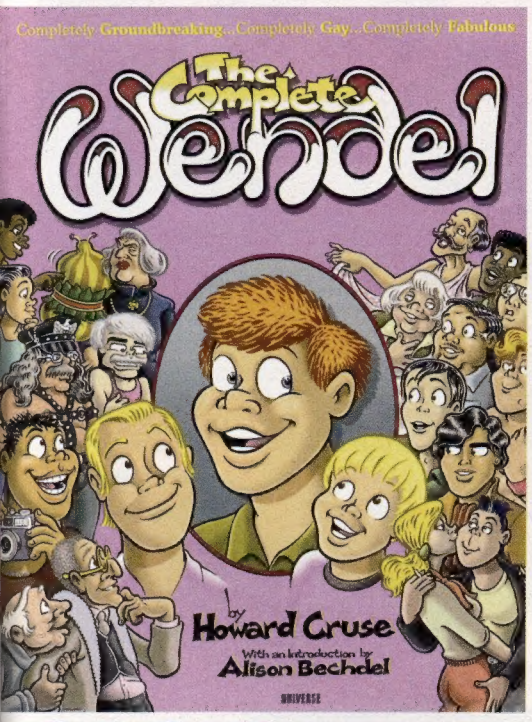
—Vinnie Bellizia

The "Cruse-ing Into History" Award

Howard Cruse

"We lost a true legend with his passing from cancer on November 26. *Howard Cruse* elevated the potential for comics and characters in ways never seen before him: first with his introductions of ***Barefoot*** and ***Wendel***, which humorously and poignantly told the tales of his young LGBTQ characters; then by founding the anthology *Gay Comix* in 1980. For many young LGBTQ readers like myself, these were my first glimpses of a wider world where I was not alone and was even welcomed and appreciated. His 1995 graphic novel ***Stuck Rubber Baby***, told the story of a gay man coming of age in the South during the civil rights era of the 1960s. It still stands as one of the best and most significant graphic novels of all times. We all owe him a debt for his role in evolving this medium that we love."

—Steven Solomon



The "You Had To Be There" Award

Superman's Pal Jimmy Olsen #1

"The best joke in 2019 is in the first issue of the superb ***Superman's Pal Jimmy Olsen*** limited series. On the last panel of the page Clark Kent gives a fourth-wall-busting, Golden Age–style wink at the reader. In the next panel, a bemused coworker is startled by the sight of Clark standing there with one eye closed for no reason. People didn't think Clark was Superman. People just thought that Clark was just weird."

—Michael & Allison King

The "Ghosts of Spider-Man Past" Award

The Final Spider-Man Comic Strip

"The last original ***Spider-Man*** daily strip appeared in March (in select newspapers and in ***Comic Shop News***). For decades the strip was credited to *Stan Lee* but was actually scripted by veteran writer *Roy Thomas*, who appears along with veteran artist *Alex Saviuk* in the very last panel."

—Jack Dumpert

The "Not Monkee-ing Around" Award

Mike Allred's Christmas Party! Album Cover

"Okay, it's not a comic... but *Mike Allred's* cover illustration to ***The Monkees's Christmas Party!*** album proves that if there is ever an official ***Monkees*** comic or a ***Batman '66*** crossover (hint... hint...) he is the perfect artist for the job!"

—Tony Bowers

The "Elmore Leonard" Award

Marvel Comics

"Mystery writer *Elmore Leonard* once advised writers to "leave out all the parts readers skip." That would be great advice for Marvel Comics, only we'd need to change it to "leave out all the comics readers skip." Marvel is publishing some outstanding books, but it weakens the strength of its line with unwanted miniseries and filler oneshots that hardly anyone buys or reads. The Marvel Zombie used to be a real thing, but no one wants to buy every Marvel comic when so many of them aren't worth the cost or the time it takes to read them."

—Louis Schiller

The "Black Box" Award

DC's Black Label Books

"I can see why DC wants to show off some of the art on the Black Label titles in this bigger format, but it's a real problem for those of us who have the rest of our collection neatly organized in comic book boxes, which are too small for these oversized books. Thankfully my local comic shop sells individual bags and boards for the Black Label stuff, so at least I can protect them!"

—Ernie Chavez

The "Cutting Edge" Award

Blade Runner 2019

"This comic is a perfect continuation of the ***Blade Runner*** story! And how wonderful that we got all those great *Syd Mead* covers... and how sad that he passed away."

—Renee Jackson

The "Time Machine" Award

Facsimile Editions

"I wasn't even born when books like ***Incredible Hulk #181*** or ***Detective Comics #359*** came out, but thanks to these books that reprint original comics, ads and all, it's like I've gone back in time to when these books were originally on the shelves. Well, the price isn't the same, but you can't have everything..."

—Allison Abernathy

The "Let's Thank the Messenger" Award

Comic Shop News

"Let's thank *Cliff Biggers and Ward Batty* for reliably providing us with the latest news and updates about the characters, creators, and books we love every single week! Never MIA, and no variants are necessary to keep us coming back for this free and much-appreciated service. And while we're at it, let's also thank our local stores for bringing us ***CSN*** every Wednesday at their own expense!"

—Steven Solomon

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And there you have it: the best and worst of 2019, according to you, our ***CSN*** readers! Thanks to everyone who submitted nominations, and I wish we had room to offer something from everyone (you might be surprised to learn how many comics or creators were spotlighted in six or more different Red K submissions, so some of the awards that made the cut actually represent the sentiments of many other readers as well). And look for us in late December, when we'll do it all over again for 2020!

(Special recognition goes to *Steven Solomon*, who submitted more Red K Awards than any other reader this year, beating out long-time contributor *Tony Bowers* by one award. We weren't able to include all of their awards in this issue—we wanted to include some of the best that our other readers had to offer, too—but we certainly look forward to seeing what Steven and Tony have to say each year!)